

The Public Health Training Program In Pennsylvania

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THE INITIAL IMPETUS for the development of a training program for professional and technical public health personnel in Pennsylvania was a survey by the American Public Health Association in 1948. At the request of the Pennsylvania Medical Society and other professional and community organizations in the State, the Committee on Administrative Practice conducted a comprehensive study of the Commonwealth's public health administration. The committee's report entitled "Keystones of Public Health for Pennsylvania" contained eight major recommendations, including the establishment of county health departments, the reorganization of the State department of health, the adoption of a merit system, and the extension of professional training opportunities to all public health workers in the State.

Under the training recommendations in the report was the following explanatory paragraph: "Nothing could be done which would have a greater impact on services to the people of Pennsylvania than to build up a large group of well-trained public health workers. Training, all of which must be of a high professional quality, should be of several kinds: formal and informal, preservice and inservice, classroom,

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and supervised field experience. Continuous training activity should be a major responsibility of the State department of health, with participation by local official and voluntary agencies. There should be close liaison with every professional educational institution in the field of public health in the Commonwealth." Of the eight keystones, action was taken first on this training recommendation.

In 1949, a conference of four agencies interested in promoting better public health services in Pennsylvania—the Graduate School of Public Health of the University of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Department of Health, the Pennsylvania State Department of Health, and the Public Health Service—resulted in an agreement to establish the Pittsburgh Field Training Center. Expeditious action by all interested parties culminated in the presentation of the first environmental sanitation training course in early 1950.

Because of the Public Health Service's participation, the activities of the training center encompass several States on a regional basis. Trainees have been enrolled from Ohio, New Jersey, and Illinois, as well as from Pennsylvania. Sanitarians from the Pittsburgh Department of Health made up the first few training classes, but in recent years the predominant trainee has been the Pennsylvania State Department of Health sanitarian.

Although the program at the training center was fulfilling a vital need for environmental

sanitation training, it soon became apparent that other steps were necessary if a broad training program for other public health workers was to be instituted as recommended in the American Public Health Association committee report. With this in mind, the State secretary of health, Dr. Russell E. Teague, invited the senior training officer of the training center to come to Harrisburg as director of professional training for the Pennsylvania State Department of Health. Prompt approval by the Training Branch of the Communicable Disease Center resulted in this change of assignment in August 1951.

Types of Training

During the past 2 years the professional training program in Pennsylvania has included all phases of training—graduate, undergraduate, field training, and continued education. In the graduate training program, selected candidates, usually employed in a supervisory or executive capacity, are enrolled in schools of public health for a full academic year. In most cases these students matriculate for the master of public health degree, although occasionally master's degrees are obtained in such specialties as nutrition and sanitary engineering. Graduate study for the doctor of public health degree may be offered to the administrators of extensive public health programs.

The undergraduate training program consists primarily of the enrollment of registered nurses in accredited schools of nursing for their certificates in public health nursing—a course of study which involves a minimum of two semesters. Because most registered nurses have been employed initially without public health experience or training, the State health department has assumed the responsibility of assisting staff nurses to obtain these necessary qualifications. Nurses who desire to obtain their bachelor's degree are granted leave without pay to complete their undergraduate work. In addition, nurses, chemists, bacteriologists, engineers, and other staff members enrolled in extension courses for academic credit receive financial assistance toward their tuition payments.

Field training has been defined by the Committee on Professional Education of the American Public Health Association as “an opportunity to study the field application of the principles and practices of public health.” The Pennsylvania State Department of Health makes available to public health personnel several types of field training, each of which is designed to serve a distinct purpose.

Observation: A planned visit to a health agency to observe the public health program without active participation therein.

Orientation: Preparation of a person for a specific job under the auspices of the employing agency.

Supervised field experience: Planned instruction, observation, and active participation in a comprehensive organized public health program.

Apprenticeship: An extended period of active service under supervision in a public health program without prior academic training in public health.

Residency: An extended period of active service under supervision in a public health program following a period of formal academic training in public health.

As indicated in the table, the field training program has, to the present, involved only nurses, health educators, and sanitarians. Public health nurses who have taken portions of their undergraduate work or who have completed the requirements for the master of pub-

Participants in public health training program, Pennsylvania, since July 1, 1951

Professional category	Graduate study	Undergraduate study	Field training	Continued education	Total
Physician.....	5	-----	-----	8	13
Dentist.....	1	-----	-----	-----	1
Nurse.....	9	64	9	124	206
Engineer.....	-----	-----	-----	33	33
Health educator..	2	-----	2	-----	4
Nutritionist.....	1	-----	-----	4	5
Sanitarian.....	2	-----	47	159	208
Laboratory personnel.....	-----	-----	-----	19	19
Industrial hygienist.....	-----	1	-----	4	5
Total.....	20	65	58	351	494

lic health degree, are assigned to qualified health departments for from 1 to 3 months of supervised field experience. Sanitarians, following their intensive course at the training center, are assigned to city and county health departments in adjoining States for 6 weeks of observation and supervised field experience. Field training for health educators has consisted of 1 to 2 years of apprenticeship with a selected health department prior to matriculation in a school of public health.

The continued education program includes short courses, seminars, institutes, and workshops. Because this type of training is adaptable to all levels of instruction, it is offered to all public health personnel regardless of their previous training and experience. With the active cooperation of department staff members and through close affiliation with colleges and universities, professional societies, voluntary health agencies, and the Public Health Service, the State health department assists in developing and conducting various kinds of training courses to meet the apparent needs of public health personnel in Pennsylvania.

Typical examples of continued education are the 10-week course in environmental sanitation for sanitarians at the training center, a 1-week course in cardiology for physicians employed in State tuberculosis sanatoriums, 2-week courses in such subjects as cancer, heart disease, tuberculosis, and mental health for public health nurses, and a 2-week course in radiological health for engineers.

Discussion

The Pittsburgh Field Training Center is one example of the existing coordination of training activities in the State. Although it is sponsored by four different health agencies, the designa-

tion of the director of professional training as director of the training center makes the environmental sanitation training program an integral part of the entire professional training program. Recruitment, orientation, field assignments, and financial arrangements are handled by the division of professional training, thus permitting the training center staff to concentrate on course content, teaching assignments, demonstration equipment, and audiovisual aids. Close contact between the State training and sanitation directors provides an analysis of the training needs, development of adequate programs at the training center, selective recruitment, and effective followup and evaluation.

Similar coordination in other training programs is achieved through active participation in the functions of professional organizations. Membership on committees of the State nurses associations and on the faculty of the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health enables the director of professional training to obtain invaluable assistance in the planning and operation of training programs. For example, the director of professional training is the health department representative to the Pennsylvania League for Nursing, and as such, considers desirable qualifications for public health nurses in the State. He also helps plan to improve the various graduate and undergraduate curriculums, short courses, and workshops for this professional group.

A statewide Training Advisory Committee, composed of representatives of most of the agencies and educational institutions interested in training activities, completes the cycle of community participation in the professional training program for public health personnel in Pennsylvania.

